

**A BRIEF INTRODUCTION
TO
TAJWEED**

In The English Language

by
Umm Muhammad

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“Whoever recites the Qur'aan being skillful in it will be with the honorable messenger-angels. And whoever recites the Qur'aan with hesitation as it is difficult for him will have a double reward.”

(A hadeeth narrated by al-Bukhāri, Muslim, at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Mājah.)

To every brother and sister who has felt the handicap of a foreign tongue...

To every Muslim whose love of the Qur'aan has urged him to overcome his own limitations, trusting that reward is in proportion to effort, striving and reaching out to Allāh...

With His help, nothing is impossible.

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CHART OF ARABIC LETTERS AND SYMBOLS

ARABIC LETTER OR MARK	NAME	SYMBOL USED IN THIS TEXT
ا, آ (vowel)	alif	aa or ā
ب	baa	b
ت	taa	t
ث	thaa	th
ج	jeem	j
ح	ḥaa	h
خ	khaa	kh
د	daal	d
ذ	dhaal	dh
ر	raa	r
ز	zaay	z
س	seen	s
ش	sheen	sh
ص	ṣaad	s
ض	<u>d</u> haad	<u>dh</u>
ط	ṭaa	ṭ
ظ	<u>th</u> aa	<u>th</u>
ع	‘ayn	‘

CHART OF ARABIC LETTERS AND SYMBOLS

ARABIC LETTER OR MARK	NAME	SYMBOL USED IN THIS TEXT
غ	ghayn	gh
ف	faa	f
ق	qaaf	q
ك	kaaf	k
ل	laam	l
م	meem	m
ن	noon	n
ه	haa	h
و	waaw	w
و (as vowel)	waaw	oo or ū
ي	yaa	y
ي (as vowel)	yaa	ee or ī
ء	hamzah	’
َ	Fathah	a
ُ	<u>d</u> hammah	u
ِ	kasrah	i
ّ	shaddah	doubled letter
◌	sukoon	absence of vowel

PRONUNCIATION OF ARABIC LETTERS

In order to acquire the proper pronunciation of Arabic sounds it is imperative that one hears them repeatedly and then practices until precision is attained. This is true even for Arabic speaking people when they undertake the study of *tajweed*, since modern dialects have deviated from the pure classical Arabic of the Qur'aan, and since some letters have taken on different pronunciations in colloquial speech. The teacher, therefore, must be one who himself has learned correct pronunciation, not depending solely on a knowledge of modern written Arabic.

No attempt has been made here to give approximate phonetic equivalents to Arabic letters in other languages. That method, although acceptable as an aid to the student of ordinary modern Arabic, does not give the accuracy required for *tajweed*.

As a supplement to audio-vocal training, *tajweed* studies include both pinpointing the *makhraj* (the point of articulation of each letter [plural *makhaarij*]) and defining certain qualities or characteristics (*sifaat*) of each letter which distinguish it from other sounds.

MAKHAARIJ (المخارج)

In the human body, the area of speech is divided into five main sections:

1. <i>al-jawf</i>	الْجَوْف	the interior or chest area
2. <i>al-halq</i>	الْحَلْق	the throat
3. <i>al-lisaan</i>	اللِّسَان	the tongue
4. <i>ash-shafataan</i>	الشَّفَتَان	the lips
5. <i>al-khayshūm</i>	الْخَيْشُوم	the nasal passage

These are further subdivided into a total of seventeen subsections which are the actual points of articulation. They are listed in order (from innermost to outermost) below, along with the letters which are formed in each *makhraj*:

The interior is one *makhraj* for three letters:

1. الْجَوْف - The interior is one *makhraj* in itself and includes the empty area of the open mouth. From it emerge the vowel sounds of ا (*alif*) pronounced "aa," و (*waaw*) pronounced "oo" and ي (*yaa*), pronounced "ee."

This *makhraj* is an estimated or approximate one (تقديري) while all others are true or actual (حقيقي) because they apply to consonant sounds and can be pinpointed more accurately.

The throat section contains three *makhaarij* for six letters:

2. أَقْصَى الْحَلْق - The deepest part of the throat is the *makhraj* for ء (*hamzah*), a glottal stop (pronounced in English at the beginning of words that start with vowels such as: ate, eat, out). It is a true written consonant in Arabic and must be pronounced clearly whether it occurs at the beginning, middle or end of a word.

From this section of the throat also, but slightly higher, emerges ه (*haa*).

3. وَسَطُ الْحَلْق - The mid-throat is the *makhraj* of ع (*'ayn*) and just above it, ح (*haa*), a sharper "h" sound than ه.
4. أَدْنَى الْحَلْق - The nearest part of the throat (to the mouth) is the *makhraj* of غ (*ghayn*) followed by خ (*khaa*)³.

³ A common error in the pronunciation of *ghayn* and *khaa* is caused by allowing them to merge from the mouth rather than the throat.